

MONTANA TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Newsline

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Legislative Session Produces Significant Changes for Montana's Transportation System

During the recently completed 56th Legislative Session, lawmakers passed and Governor Racicot signed several bills of importance to Montana's transportation users. Although not all the bills supported by MDT were successful, Montanans will see several significant changes thanks to the 56th Legislature. Below are examples of some of these bills.

Passed - Secondary Highway Program

This bill was the result of mutual recognition by counties and MDT of a problem with the maintenance and preservation of Secondary Highways. The intent of the bill was to ensure preservation of Montana's paved Secondary Highways, provide increased flexibility in Secondary Highway construction program management, and to reform an outdated funding distribution formula.

The distribution formula for funding changed to make 65 percent of the funds allocated available for capital improvements with the other 35 percent dedicated to preservation. It also distributes these funds among the five financial districts according to an updated formula with provisions for borrowing against future apportionments. These changes will encourage larger more cost effective projects. MDT and the counties will establish a process for selecting and prioritizing Secondary projects at the District level rather than the county level. MDT will take over the maintenance of paved Secondary Highways by January 1, 2001. A bi-partisan cooperative effort led to the passage of this bill, and Montana's Secondary Highway program will improve and be more efficient as a result.

Passed - Flexible Use of Secondary and Urban Highway Funds

This legislation provides Montana's counties and 14 urban areas with the flexibility to expend either Urban or Secondary program funds on transportation projects, or programs off the right-of-way of Urban or Secondary routes (such as enhancements or transit projects).

To use these funds, the local governments will have to ask the Transportation Commission to approve their projects. State fuel tax receipts will not be used to match the expenditures. This means the involved local governments will have to consider carefully the use of this flexibility, for it requires approximately 13% in local matching funds. This bill gives local governments more funding flexibility, supports MDT's TranPlan 21 policy goal of flexibility, and saves State Special Revenue funds necessary to match the increased Federal program.

Passed - Aviation Fuel Tax Increase

The current aviation fuel tax is the sole funding source for the services provided by the Aeronautics Division of the Montana Department of Transportation since it was created

in 1945. To maintain existing programs, and restore those that were eliminated or reduced, a one-cent fuel tax increase was needed.

The one-cent aviation fuel tax increase will be applied to both general aviation and jet fuel. This money will be used to restore or improve many programs and projects, including air search and rescue, flight safety training, pilot safety/education clinics, maintenance of the 14 state-owned airports, and reinstatement of aviation education programs. Lastly, 25 percent of the money will be placed into a runway pavement preservation account for Montana's air carrier airports.

Passed - Eliminate Requirement to Fund Footpaths and Bike Trails

This bill was mis-named. It does not eliminate the requirement for \$200,000 in expenditures on these facilities, but it did eliminate a particular accounting requirement that the funding source be State Special Revenues. This reference to a particular category of money was out of date and imposed a needless administrative burden. The amended statute is from the 1940's through 1970's when there was a need for a minimum level of support through State funds for bike and pedestrian facilities, at a time when Federal funds were unavailable. However, now there are several Federally supported funding programs these facilities are eligible for, and many times the \$200,000 level is being expended annually on bike and pedestrian facilities.

This legislation only eliminated the administrative tracking requirement for expenditure of state special revenues for bike/pedestrian projects. But it will have no impact on MDT's on-going commitment to bike and pedestrian projects.

Failed - Allocate State Funds Appropriated for Public Transit to Public Transit

The goal of this bill was to make all state funds apportioned for transit actually available for transit. Under current law, half of the \$150,000 in state fuel taxes annually appropriated for public transportation is allocated

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among the counties. Once allocated to the counties, these funds must be used for transportation purposes. However, rarely are these funds used for public transportation. Counties generally use the funds for highways.

This proposed re-allocation of funds did not require a local match, and would have supported the development and expansion of modal options and transit alternatives. Any small loss of funds to the counties would have been more than offset by MDT taking over the maintenance of paved Secondary Highways.

Viable transit services are an important part of the mix of transportation services in Montana. Even though Federal transit and highway resources support Montana's transit programs, there are unmet needs. This bill would have helped the transit operators provide these vital services, and it is hoped that transit advocates will consider pursuing this issue again in the future.

Passed - More Rest Areas Open Year Round

MDT received approval from the 56th Legislature to increase its rest area budget to finance the added expense of keeping four more rest areas open year-round, and improve existing rest areas. MDT sought this increase because of public input to improve rest areas and keep more open all year. Currently nine rest areas on the interstate are open year round: Bearmouth, Quartz Flats, Red Rock, Dearborn, Teton River, Bad Route, Greycliff, Columbus, and Hysham. The non-interstate system has three year-round areas at Armington Jct., Broadus, and Culbertson.



Armington Junction

Public Lands Highways Discretionary Program

On March 24 the Montana Transportation Commission approved the state's process for ranking state submissions to the Federal Highway Administration for Public Lands Highway (PLH) discretionary grants.

PLH funds will be aggressively sought by Montana under the current Federal program (see earlier Newsline editions for information on TEA-21). Under the previous Federal program known as ISTEA, any funding received by the state for PLH grants was lost the following year from our core highway funding. TEA-21 removed this funding penalty and opened the door for Montana to go after Federal funds for fiscal years '98/'99 and beyond.

The statewide ranking project process was developed with extensive input from Montana's local governments and Federal land management agencies. Its intent is to ensure beneficial and competitive projects will be put forward for this limited funding source.

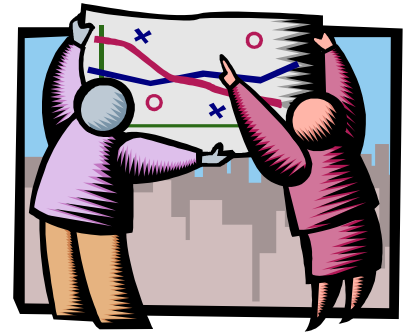
While eligibility is fairly broad, the competition will be keen. PLH funds are available for just about any kind of federally eligible transportation project on roads within, adjacent to or providing access to public lands. While this describes the vast majority of roads in Montana, there will be less than \$80 million available nationwide for fiscal years 2000 through 2003.

Getting a project funded will not only take a good project, but a lot of effort by the proposing entity, the state and Montana's Congressional Delegation.

Last year the state's application won enough PLH funding to reconstruct Secondary 314 in the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. This project will be let to contract later this summer.

While there's not a lot of PLH funding nationwide, every little bit helps chip away at the needs of Montana's highways and bridges.

Montana's prioritization process and a list of the information needed by the state to consider a nomination are available by calling Jeff Ebert at (406) 444-7639 or jebert@state.mt.us.



MDT Seeks Project Nominations

MDT's Project Analysis Section is gearing up for the 2000 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program process. One of the first steps is to solicit nominations for transportation projects. Although most people don't realize it, anyone can suggest projects for improving Montana's transportation system. These project nominations can be for any of Montana's highway systems, including projects for reconstruction, resurfacing, bridge rehabilitation or replacement, safety improvements, or any other component of the system. Ideas for non-highway projects are also considered.

People often ask about the status of projects that have already been approved. If you would like to know the status of a project, your inquiries are always welcome. The Project Analysis Section is more than willing to advise you of the status of a project, and give its best estimate of when the project will be ready to go.

So, whether you have an idea for a future transportation project, or you are just curious about a current project, feel free to contact Jeff Ebert, Supervisor for the Project Analysis Section at (406)444-7639 or 800-714-7296 or jebert@state.mt.us.

Rest Area Design Change

"It looks like a 1920 military facility!" is how one out-of-state visitor described one of Montana's rest areas during MDT's 1998 Rest Area User Survey. Comments like this, and analysis conducted as part of the update of MDT's Long-range Rest Area Plan, have led the department to reconsider its approach to rest area design.

The survey confirmed that most users like MDT's newer rest areas, such as the ones at Troy, Armington Junction, Culbertson, Wibaux, and Broadus. However, the department has developed two additional rest area designs that incorporate user suggestions and provide the department additional alternatives for these important safety and tourist facilities.

To address safety concerns, the new designs include additional security features, such as better lighting and visibility from parking areas, and will even include security cameras in some high-volume areas. The designs will also incorporate built-in pressure washer systems and maintenance-friendly materials to address recurring complaints about rest area cleanliness. Rest area users will also find hot water, soap dispensers, and electronic travel information to guide them on their journeys.

The most visible change will be the exterior appearance of the new rest areas. One design developed for high-volume rest areas located near cities will incorporate large windows and natural exterior materials. The first application of this design will be on Interstate 90 near Bozeman, with construction scheduled to begin this summer.

The second and most innovative design is intended for rural areas where compatibility with the surrounding area and low utility and maintenance costs are primary goals. The first use of this design will be at Sweetgrass on Interstate 15.

As the department gradually incorporates these designs into rest area construction and rehabilitation projects over the next few years, Montana residents and the over eight million out-of-state visitors a year should see significant improvements in what another rest area user described as facilities that "looked like they came from a prison".

Bozeman Rest Area Design



Sweetgrass Rest Area Design



Selected comments from 1998 Rest Area User Survey:

"Let's tell tourists we want them to spend time in Montana by providing good rest stops"

"Every state needs rest areas such as this one"

"On average, the rest areas here are well maintained"

"Dirtier than I am"

"Rest areas are a major consideration when choosing a route"

"Montana has some of the poorest rest areas in the country"

"The seat was very, very, very, very, very, cold"

"Not enough parking for trucks"

"No soap, no warm water"

"Thank you for doing this survey"

Montana Rest Area User Survey Report Completed



Western Transportation Institute (WTI) at Montana State University, Bozeman, recently completed the Montana Rest Area User Survey Report, part of a three-phase effort by MDT to update its Long-range Rest Area Plan.

The survey was conducted last summer at 16 rest area sites around the state to determine the needs and expectations of rest area users. The survey asked questions regarding the cleanliness and quality of rest areas, how Montana rest areas compare to those in other states, recommended improvements, and the need for additional amenities and rest area locations.

This is MDT's first public opinion survey that comprehensively addresses specific rest area issues. The statewide survey response rate was 53%, resulting in a survey sample of 1067.

Some of the findings were:

- Overall rest area satisfaction was favorable, but the levels dropped when asked to compare to rest areas outside Montana.
- Rest area cleanliness, facility operability, and availability of supplies were criticized.
- Most dissatisfied rest area users are business travelers (i.e., sales people, truck drivers) rather than tourists.
- Most respondents want year-round access to restroom facilities.
- The majority of users responded negatively to the idea of private development at rest areas (i.e., gas stations, stores, and restaurants).
- Most respondents expressed a desire for more rest areas in Montana, with the most common request being one every 50 miles.

MDT Video on Transportation Demand Management



The Transit Section is nearing completion of a 14 minute video that provides an overview of Transportation Demand Management techniques in Montana.

"This video is another tool to better educate the public about transportation options available," according to Janis Winston, supervisor of MDT's Transit section, "Our goal is to reduce the number of single occupant vehicles where possible."

The project was a collaborative effort involving MDT, the Missoula Ravalli Transportation Management Association (MR TMA), and Peter Schauer Associates. The video is being produced by Production West, Inc., Billings, and funded by a Federal Transit Administration grant.

"Transportation demand management is about choices," according to Noel Larrivee, director of MR TMA. "Whether it is taking the bus, carpooling, vanpooling, riding your bike or walking to work, or the store, people have a variety of options other than simply driving their car. Not only can people save money, but they can also help reduce traffic congestion, and improve air quality by using an alternative mode of travel. Even one day a week will benefit most communities," Larrivee noted.

As part of the project, public service announcements (PSA) depicting the benefits of TDM will also be prepared. The videos and the PSAs should be available in May. For further information, please contact Janis Winston at (406)444-4210 or Noel Larrivee at (406)523-4944.

Rural Passenger Transportation Needs Study

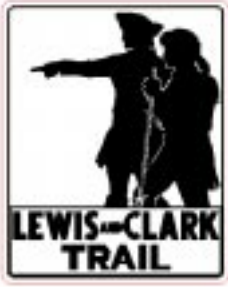
MDT's Transit Section is drafting a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a study to determine passenger transportation needs in the state's rural areas. The study will include an inventory of all rural passenger transportation providers in the state, not just those using Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funds.

Information from the study will be used to assist the Transit Section in selecting agencies that have applied for FTA funding for capital and/or operating assistance, as well as identify alternatives, coordinate existing services, and assess needs. For more information, contact Janis Winston at (406)444-4210 or jwinston@state.mt.us.

***For more information,
or to request a copy of the Rest Area Report,
call Jan Vogel at (406) 444-4262 or
jvogel@state.mt.us.***

***The TDD number is (800) 335-7592 for the
hearing impaired.***

***Alternative accessible formats of this
document will be provided upon request.***



Plans Underway for Lewis & Clark Bicentennial

The year 2003 marks the beginning of the 200th anniversary of the historic Lewis & Clark Expedition (1803-1806). Public agencies, tribal governments, private organizations, and Montana communities are looking at ways to attract and prepare for the influx of visitors to Montana for this important event.

MDT is working with the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Focus Team of the Montana Tourism and Recreation Initiative (MTRI) to share information with other MTRI federal and state agencies and tribal governments to identify projects which will enhance the Montana Lewis & Clark Bicentennial.

One project underway is a Lewis & Clark Interpretive Sign Plan for Montana that will:

- Evaluate existing interpretive signs in Montana and look at the need for improvements;
- Look for new sign locations where information gaps exist;
- Base sign placement on public involvement, traffic, visitor use, economic development, and funding availability; and
- Visually link signs statewide and with neighboring states

The Plan is being developed by Heritage Design, a U.S. Forest Service team, and should be completed in September 1999. The Plan will help ensure that sign proposals are part of a coordinated effort, rather than considered on a case-by-case basis. The department also believes it will help agencies, tribal governments, local communities, and others make decisions on how best to promote Montana's Lewis & Clark Bicentennial.

Other Lewis & Clark Bicentennial activities at MDT:

- Produced a map which identifies Montana rest area locations, Lewis & Clark designated routes, scenic turnouts, historical highway markers, and Lewis & Clark Trailblazer signs.
- Replacing missing Lewis & Clark Trailblazer signs.
- Improving the design and maintenance of rest areas, in part due to the expected increase of visitors for the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial.
- Partnering with the U.S. Forest Service and Idaho Transportation Department to build rest area/visitor centers at Lost Trail Pass and Lolo Pass, both along the Lewis & Clark Trail.
- Discussions with the BLM about a proposed rest area/visitor center at Pompeys Pillar, another popular Lewis & Clark site.
- Development of an Internet map that may provide alternative routes to Bicentennial events.
- Working with Travel Montana to enhance travel information and information about the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial via:
 - MDT's road report
 - Travel Montana's web site and computerized information centers/ kiosks
 - Rest area bulletin boards
 - MDT's variable message signs
 - Automobile GIS systems

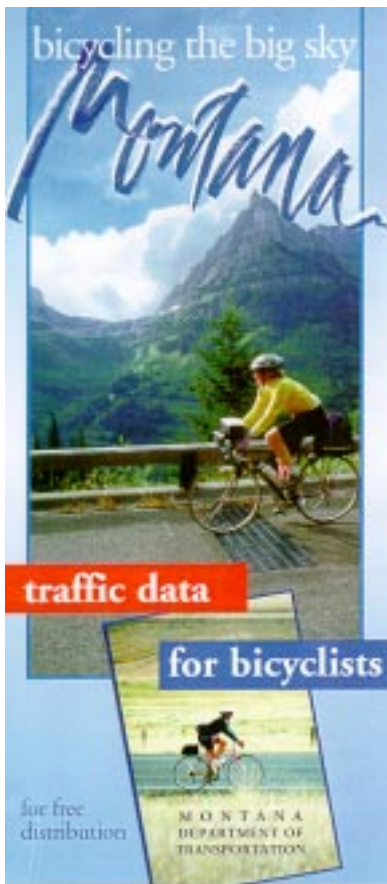


SPEED LIMIT LAW CHANGE - R U READY???

MAY 28, 1999

(Always obey the posted speed signs)

Cars, Light Trucks: 75 Interstates day / night
70 other public roads day / 65 night
65 Hwy 93 day / night
Trucks : 65 Interstates day / night



Bicycling Bits

The long awaited State Bicycle Map is finally done. Look for the "Traffic Data for Bicyclists" color brochure to hit the shelves throughout the state in early May. It contains information on roadway average daily traffic volumes, shoulder widths, rumble strips, mountainous terrain, rest areas, bicycling laws, safety, and points of contact for emergency, tourist, and other information. For further information, contact Jennifer Dalrymple, Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator at (406) 444-9273 or jdalrymple@state.mt.us.

1999 Busy Year for CTEP Pedestrian/Bicycle projects

This summer will be a busy one for construction of Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) pedestrian and bicycle initiatives throughout the state. Projects like the installation of audible pedestrian signals in Great Falls, extensions for the Great Northern Historical Trail in Kalispell, sidewalk replacements in Circle, and an interstate pedestrian overpass in Montana City, to name a few. All told, 57 projects are slated for construction this summer to a tune of approximately \$7.7 million.



One of the noteworthy projects completed last fall was the Custer/Henderson Path in Helena. This 10-foot wide asphalt path connects to several different activity centers along the route; CR Anderson Middle School, Ryan Park and ball fields, Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds, Capital High School, Bill Roberts Golf Course, and the Spring Meadow - Centennial Park Trail. It is an extension of the Custer Path, which had previously ended at Benton Road, and is another important link in the network of paths planned for the Helena area.

For additional information on the CTEP program, contact Ed Hedlund at (406)444-0809. For information concerning other bicycle and pedestrian activities, contact Jennifer Dalrymple, Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator at (406) 444-9273 or jdalrymple@state.mt.us.

CTEP UPDATE

CTEP (Community Transportation Enhancement Program) has recently re-located to new offices in the MDT building and is currently working towards a simplified Program Guidelines manual. We are simplifying terminologies and forms for maximum efficiency for program participants.

The TEA-21 era CTEP began in January. Eligible local agencies include counties, cities (1st, 2nd and 3rd class), as well as all seven tribal governments. All participating agencies have designated a Local Program Administrator (contact person). This program election is for the first two years of TEA-21 (FFY 1998 and FFY 1999). The public is invited to participate in the development of this process through the participating agencies' contact persons. The CTEP Planning staff will assist the Local Planning Administrators in this endeavor. CTEP suballocations have been calculated based on the information received for FFY 1998 and FFY 1999, and notification has been provided to all eligible agencies.



Mike Davis, Pat Ernst, Myron Tucker, Ed Hedlund,
Sid Curnow, Barb Morin

Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities Design Workshop

Alex Sorton, MSCE from Northwestern University Traffic Institute, will present a MDT-sponsored course on May 19-20, on the design and plan of pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

The course will include an overview of bicyclist and pedestrian problems and needs, traffic management strategies, legal liabilities, and facility design and guidelines.

Mr. Sorton has over thirty years of transportation engineering-related work experience. He is a member of the Institute of Transportation Engineers and the American Society of Civil Engineers. He is also a member of the Transportation Research Board's Highway Capacity and Quality of Service Committee. He is involved with the development of the year 2000 Highway Capacity Manual and has just finished a 2 1/2 year research study for FHWA on the development of a Bicycle Compatibility Study Index (BCI). The BCI uses data from roadways to determine if roadways are bicycle compatible.



*For more information and to
register, contact Jennifer
Dalrymple, Bicycle and Pedestrian
Coordinator at
(406) 444-9273
or
jdalrymple@state.mt.us.*

Montana Can Breathe Easier with New Equipment

MDT's Planning Division last year initiated a project to purchase sweepers, flush trucks, liquid deicer applicators, and storage tanks to reduce PM-10 emissions in Montana Communities. The equipment will be used in 18 areas throughout Montana designated as non-attainment, or considered at risk of becoming non-attainment by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The process was broken into two phases, Phase I was for sweepers and flush trucks, and Phase II for liquid deicer and storage tanks. Phase I has been completed with delivery of sweepers and flush trucks beginning through May. Phase II is in the works with delivery of the liquid deicer equipment and storage tanks scheduled this summer.

The project is funded through the Montana Air & Congestion Initiative (MACI) Program that provides funds to help address air quality and con-



Last year MDT met with 18 local governments to identify their equipment needs for reducing PM-10 in their areas. Based on these needs, a list was developed and prioritized by MDT's Equipment Bureau.

With the equipment identified and prioritized, MDT's Equipment Bureau began the process of purchasing the equipment.



gestion problems in Montana. Federal funding for this equipment is 86.58% with the local governments providing the 13.42% match prior to delivery of the equipment.

As a result of this project, MDT is providing PM-10 non-attainment areas the tools to improve their air quality, and fulfill EPA and DEQ requirements. MDT is also addressing PM-10 problems proactively by allowing "at risk" areas to participate in the equipment purchase to avoid anticipated PM-10 violations.

For more information, contact Tom Steyaert at (406)444-7646 or tsteyaert@state.mt.us

MDT EVENTS

Drug Awareness Training
May 3-4
Missoula - Double Tree Hotel
May 6-7
Bozeman - Holiday Inn
June 7-8
Billings - Sheraton Inn
June 10-11
Kalispell - Cavanaugh's Hotel

Standardized Child Passenger
Safety Technical Training
May 18-21
Billings - Sheraton Hotel

Transportation Commission
Meeting
May 12 - Libby

Pedestrian & Bicyclist Facilities
Design Course
May 19-20
Helena - MDT Auditorium

For More Information on Any of These Events
Call 1-800-714-7296

Transportation Planning Division Telephone Numbers

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call **1-800-714-7296** (in Montana only), or **(406) 444-3423**. TDY (406) 444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592

Administrator (Patricia Saindon)	444-3143
Bike/Pedestrian (Jennifer Dalrymple)	444-9273
CTEP (Mike Davis)	444-4383
Mapping (Jim Erickson)	444-6119
Multimodal Planning (Dick Turner)	444-7289
Projects (Jeff Ebert)	444-7639
Public Involvement (Dave Dreher)	444-6245
Safety Programs (Drug/Alcohol, Occupant Protection) (Priscilla Sinclair)	444-7417
Secondary Roads(Gary Larson).....	444-6110
Statistics (Zia Kazimi)	444-6111
Traffic Safety (Albert Goke)	444-7301
Traffic Statistics (Dan Bisom)	444-6122
Transit (Janis Winston)	444-4210
Urban Planning (Lynn Zanto).....	444-3445
ITS Planning (Ross Tervo)	444-9248
Newsline Editor(Joan Scott)	444-7307

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